



Sacred Shock: Framing Visual Experience in Byzantium

Glenn Peers

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"So a miracle leaves its frame, and one epiphanic detail Illuminates an entire epoch" —Derek Walcott, from *Tiepolo's Hound*

Art did not exist in Byzantium. As Glenn Peers explains in *Sacred Shock*, there were, instead, a variety of devotional objects—pectoral crosses, church mosaics, icons, and illuminated manuscripts—regarded as infused with divine presence and used in religious practices. What concerns Peers in this provocative book is the means by which the relationship between the divine and the human was made manifest through crafted, material objects.

According to Peers, the devotional objects of Byzantium should be understood as having a detail or place that plays a large part in “framing” their meaning for viewers. After an insightful discussion of pectoral crosses, Peers examines a series of case studies, which includes the depiction of the blood of Christ in the Chludov Psalter, a fourteenth-century icon of St. George, and the Mandylion, a famous relic thought to preserve the traces of Christ’s face.

Sacred Shock combines fine scholarship with close analysis of Byzantine devotional objects and discussion of issues of broad importance to the study of visual experience. It is significant as both an exploration of art-historical methodology and a contribution to our understanding of the medieval world.

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